

The CRIMSON STAIN

Novelized by ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE, from the Consolidated Motion Picture Triumph.

CHAPTER I.
THE BRAND OF SATAN.

The big Montrose house at Riverdale seemed to have awakened from a long time of gloom. For six months it had been shuttered and all but deserted. Now its blinds were up. There were fresh flowers in the window boxes and on the deep veranda. There were new life and gaiety to the very atmosphere of the place.

For a half year Dr. Montrose had dwelt here alone, except for his silent-footed assistant, Felix. Here, day and night, the doctor had labored in his laboratory, tirelessly perfecting the experiments to which he had devoted himself since his wife's death. He had refused all invitations, denied himself to all visitors, shut up all of his great house except the laboratory wing.

But now, in a breath, everything was changed. Florence, his 18-year-old daughter, had come home from a six-month visit to a school chum in the West, and instantly her bright presence had restored the old house to its former brightness.

It was in the early evening of the third day after Florence's return to Riverdale. She was sitting alone on the veranda, when a man turned in at the gate and came hurrying up the path toward the house. Florence's face flushed with genuine pleasure at sight of the visitor as he moved forward through the early summer twilight.

He was above middle height, graceful of figure and bearing, and with a good deal of hair. His early stride and the pose of his mighty shoulders proclaimed the athlete, even as the broad forehead and full eyes denoted the thinker and the firm-molded jaw the man of action.

Florence ran down the steps to greet him. "At last you have come," she eagerly exclaimed. "I had thought Harold Stanley had forgotten his schoolgirl friend in his busy career of doing nothing."

"Doing nothing? I thought it was down and out. I've made it the most powerful newspaper in New York—perhaps in America. I did it for the sake of my only son. Now my only son can either be a loafer and squander the money I've earned or take on the business from the bottom up and make himself fit to carry on this great work when I am dead. Which shall it be? I leave the choice to you. So I pitched in. It seemed the only thing for a white man to do."

"No," he said. "On the way to the pay roll of the New York Examiner, I have been there five months as a cub reporter. When I finished college I had a real Dutch uncle talk with me. Among several hundred other remarks of general interest he said to me: 'Son, I've spent thirty years in building up the Examiner. I bought it when it was down and out. I've made it the most powerful newspaper in New York—perhaps in America. I did it for the sake of my only son. Now my only son can either be a loafer and squander the money I've earned or take on the business from the bottom up and make himself fit to carry on this great work when I am dead. Which shall it be? I leave the choice to you. So I pitched in. It seemed the only thing for a white man to do.'"

"Good for you!" applauded Florence. "I think it's fine of you."

"This particular reporter," he answered, "has been spending most of his time lately, in running his feet off, chasing false clues on the Crimson Stain Mystery."

"The what?" she queried.

"The Crimson Stain Mystery," he repeated.

"What on earth is the Crimson Stain Mystery? It has a gruesome sound."

"It is gruesome," he answered. "It is the most baffling and most atrocious crime mystery that ever baffled the New York police."

"What is it?" she persisted.

"Here's the story in just a mouthful of words," he explained. "Four months ago Cyrus Q. Ferrand, a banker and known as a safe and sound man, was found murdered in his study. His safe was looted, and the murderer got clean away. The autopsy showed Ferrand had been choked to death."

"How horrible!"

"The odd feature of the case," went on Harold, "was the fact that the marks on his throat showed that the murderer's hands were long and slender and abnormally strong. Also, that his grip was one known to the Japanese experts of Japan and to the Apaches of Paris. It is a peculiar hold that paralyzes the victim's spinal cord and makes him helpless to resist; even while his breath is being shut off. It is a grip that not one 'strong-arm man' in ten thousand knows anything about. At least not in America."

"But, don't you see, the police worked on the case for all they were worth. But they couldn't find a thing. Parrish—he's the great international detective that the city has hired to clear up this case—spent days in trying to get at a clue, but he 'spend' days and he 'spend' days. 'Why not weeks or months? Surely it was worth that much trouble. Why did he stop at 'days'?"

"Because," replied Harold, "nine days later Marcus Krug, the big jeweler, was found murdered in exactly the same way, in his private office at the back of his store. The office safe, full of jewels, was cleaned out. The same queer throat grip that had killed Ferrand had strangled Krug. And again the killer got safely away."

"Two such murders in New York in four months?" she murmured, with a shudder. "And no one brought to justice? It doesn't seem possible!"

"Two such murders?" he said in sudden vehemence. "No. Not two. Fourteen!"

"Fourteen?" she gasped. "During the last four months no less than fourteen men of wealth in New York have been found strangled by just that weird throat grip. And in every case the murderer has escaped with his plunder."

"And no clue?"

"Yes and no. One clue, perhaps, but such a fantastic clue that we can't get any sense out of it."

"What is it?"

"When old Raoul Beaujolais, the restaurant man, was killed his brother found him a moment or two before he was quite dead. The murderer had been frightened away. As Beaujolais died he managed to point out the words 'Crimson Stain.' That was all. Just those two words. 'Crimson Stain.' He was the third victim of the fourteen. And ever since the series of crimes have been known as the Crimson Stain Mystery."

The third was issuing directions for the murder.

"It's Mr. Hanna!" gasped Florence. "The great real estate operator up here. I recognize his profile. They're killing him. He—"

"Quick!" commanded Harold, shaking off his momentary daze of horror. "Run back and get him. Quick!"

He sprang away from her, vaulted the street hedge and crossed the narrow strip of lawn at a bound. With clenched fist he smote the heavy plate glass pane of the window. The pane shattered in. As he leaped upward into the jagged opening Harold saw the silhouette of the third man dart away to one side of the room. The next instant the lights were switched off.

In through the broken window Harold thrust his body, heedless of the splintered glass that cut at his hands and face and rent his clothes.

As he set foot inside the pitch-dark room pocket flashlight's rays smote blindly at the wall. At the wall he saw the same instant Harold's groping hand came in contact with a dimly gilt chair. With all his might he hurled this ineffective missile at the white lines of the spotlight.

The pocket lamp fell to the ground as though knocked from its holder's hand by the force of the chair's impact.

Almost at once Stanley's outflung arm brushed against the shoulder of a man who was standing up toward him through the darkness.

Harold sprang in and grappled the unseen foe. The latter was a strong and active man, and fought with the fury of a cornered beast.

It was not in vain that Harold Stanley had been accused one of the most formidable "tacklers" of his day. Against his swift skill the other's mere brute strength was of little more avail than would have been a child's. There was no scope for judging the distance or the exact direction of a blow. So Harold forced himself to wrestle instead of hitting out.

In less than five seconds of blind struggle he found the hold he sought. One tremendous heave and he had thrust his invisible enemy clear of the floor and high in air. A second heave and the murderer went whirling through the room, bringing up with rib-crushing impact against the farther wall.

Harold, panting from his exertion, spun about, with arms expanded, to grope for the second assassin. As he did so his foot struck the inertly quivering body of a man who lay sprawling on the floor in front of him.

With a thrill of revulsion Harold realized he had stumbled over the corpse of a strangled man. He sought to recover his balance with a deft turn of his shoulders and a backward swing of his outstretched arm.

And some one seized him from behind. A set of long, ice-cold fingers wrapped themselves about the young man's muscular neck, seeking and immediately finding the windpipe. Just as two powerful hands were about to press deep into the top of his spine, directly below the base of the brain.

When the stunning effect of the blow passed he opened his eyes to find the room alight and full of people.

Florence, Montrose, and a policeman were bending over him. Servants and passers-by, attracted by the noise of battle, were thronging in. Harold started up, but he would weakly from side to side, and he would weakly from side to side, and he would weakly from side to side.

"The room was wrecked by the battle. Furniture was everywhere overturned. Rugs were in a state of confusion. But the two murderers were gone. And the wide open door of the ransacked safe proved that they had not escaped empty-handed."

He drew the terrified girl from the room as he spoke and led her down the hall to the front door. On the threshold they almost collided with a man who was coming in. The newcomer and Harold recognized each other at a glance, even in that dim light.

"Parrish," said Harold, not over-cordially.

"Good evening, Mr. Stanley," returned the detective. "They told me at the station that there's been another Crimson Stain crime. Is—"

"This is like all the rest, I suppose," hazarded Parrish. "Choked to death and no clue."

"No," contradicted Harold, with sudden elation, "there is a clue, this time. A real one. I've felt the murderer's hands around my own throat. And I've seen his eyes. And," he continued, impressively, "I know why old Mr. Beaujolais spoke of a 'Crimson Stain.' I've seen that stain."

"What?" cried both Parrish and Florence in a single breath.

"As I climbed into the front window," said Harold, "he switched off the light. But he turned an electric flash-lamp on me. The glare dazzled me and left him invisible. I threw a chair at the light and knocked it out of his hand. As it fell he before the jar of hitting the floor released the battery-catch and put out the light—its rays fell for a fraction of a second on the upper part of his face."

"You recognized him?" cried Parrish.

"No. He was no one I had ever seen. I'm not sure I recognize the face again. But I'd recognize the eyes any day on earth."

"Recognize the eyes and not the face? What do you mean?" answered Stanley.

"A fiery crimson. As if they had been stained with blood. I believe that is what Beaujolais meant by the 'Crimson Stain.' He saw—"

"But," entered Parrish, breaking into a roar of noisy derisive laughter. "That's the way with you amateurs—always imagining things and hunting up fancy clues. Crimson-stained eyes, hey? And you saw all that in the time it took a flashlight beam to flash across his face? It's the silliest drift I ever heard of."

"Probably," assented Harold, adding: "The police would have a very pleasant and comfortable time in life if it weren't for the newspapers. So would criminals."

On the night of the Hanna murder and an hour or so after the crime's discovery, several of these visitors drifted, one by one, into the den from an alley entrance. All but one were men. The exception was Vanya Tosca, a woman who, for very obvious reason, had long been named "the Vampire."

One man was evidently in high authority among the little group, to judge by the almost cringing deference bestowed on him by the rest. He was dark, sinuous, tierish, with a strange and unforgettable face and with a gaze as hypnotic as a snake's. He claimed to be French by birth and called himself "Pierre La Rue." No one knew his real name.

"All here," he said, tersely. "Here's the report. Tanner and I went to Hanna's as we planned. We got in, easily enough. Hanna was in the library alone. He was so old and feeble that I had decided to let Tanner do the job. Instead of it myself. He'd been plaguing me to let him try the grip ever since I taught it to him. It was a false move. For, he bungled. They struggled all over the room, and they got between the light and the window shade. A man smashed in through the window and threw Tanner against the wall, crippling his shoulder. I got the grip on the fellow; and I was finishing him when I heard the police whistle. He showed that cash we could find into the bag. Hand over, Tanner."

The man with the lame shoulder shuffled forward and laid a canvas sack on the table. Without troubling to look at the plunder, toward which the others were so avidly craning their necks, La Rue continued:

"Put the rest of it there."

"What d'ye mean, 'the rest of it'?" blustered Tanner. "D'ye s'pose I'm holding out on you?" It's all there. La Rue said nothing. He merely turned his snakelike gaze on the loudly protesting man. As his glance concentrated upon the sullen follower La Rue's eyes underwent a weird change. They took on a glowing crimson tinge.

Under their hypnotic glance Tanner at first flinched miserably; then with an oath thrust his hand into one of his pockets, hauled out a thick sheaf of bills and tossed them alongside the bag on the table.

"That's better," approved La Rue, his smooth voice almost like a purr. "Unless we can cure you of these petty tricks, Tanner, I'm afraid I shall have to put the finger-necklace around your unwashed throat some day."

The masked figure had come forward. Sorting and counting the money with the speed of a bank teller, he dumped it all into the bag, crossed to one side of the wall, and drew back a panel that masked a wall safe. He opened the safe, deposited the bag in it, closed the safe and panel, and came back to the rest.

"I'll remember his face," said La Rue, softly.

"Yes, and he'll remember your eyes," replied the masked man. "He saw the Crimson Stain. The Examiner will have a two-column story on that tomorrow. Better get some smoke goggles. La Rue. Everybody will be looking for the Stain after this. And you can't control it. It creeps into your eyes whenever you're excited."

"If I had five seconds more at his throat," mused La Rue, "he'd never have told any one about the stain."

Dr. Montrose sat in his library late the following afternoon. From a drawer in his desk he had just taken a copy of the Examiner and had begun to read it, when a low rap sounded on the door. Almost guiltily, the doctor folded the paper and thrust it back into the drawer.

"Come in," he called.

Felix, his assistant—a crafty-eyed man of smugly, servile mien—opened the door.

"It's two of the—the 'experiment' patients, sir, stammered the servant. "I told them you had let me out you couldn't see any one today. But they won't go away. They say they're—"

"I'll see them," ordered Montrose, a shadow as of physical pain distorting his care-worn face.

Dr. Montrose clasped his bowed head between his hands and groaned aloud. Then, rising to his feet, he squared his bent shoulders and a look of high resolve came into his haggard face. He crossed the library to the reception hall. The visitors were Vanya Tosca and Tanner. They stood eyeing Dr. Montrose with the look a hungry dog might bestow on a butcher's cart. They were depressed in looks and manner and seemed more than half ill.

"Well," Dr. Montrose sharply broke the momentary silence, "what do you want?"

"You know what we want, doctor," replied Tanner.

"And we must have it," added Vanya.

"You've both had far too much already," said Montrose in stern decision. "And you'll get no more."

At his words Vanya winced. Tanner's teeth began to chatter as if with a chill. "You can't mean that, doctor!" exclaimed Vanya. "You can't refuse us! Please!"

"No!" reiterated Montrose. "You will neither of you get any more. I curse the day I first gave it to you. Today I read of a girl and a boy who had been cured of it. You can't refuse us! Please!"

"Yes," said Tanner, eagerly, "I did that. I and La Rue. But it wasn't our fault. Not even Pierre La Rue's. It was yours. Yours! You're the cause of it all of it."

"Yes," chimed in Vanya beseechingly. "And you can't take it away from us, now. What would we be without it? What would we become?"

Montrose glared at them for an instant, then, with a hopeless sigh, surrendered. He motioned them across the laboratory. A mechanic-looking man, dressed in a white coat, was standing with furtive longings ever since they entered the room.

TO BE CONTINUED TOMORROW.

CURRENT ATTRACTIONS

Continued from page eight.

PROMISED NEXT WEEK

Belasco.

The following list of prominent attractions submitted by Manager Taylor, of the Belasco Theater, promise a brilliant season for the playhouse. Following the two weeks' engagement of Helen Hunt Jackson's "Ramona" comes as the first play "Up Stairs and Down," under the management of Oliver Morosco, continuing with "So Long Letty," "Her Soldier Boy," a new musical play; "Robinson Crusoe, Jr.," with Al Jolson; "Francis Starr," "Experience," "The World of Pleasure," "Passing Show of 1916," "Marie Tempest in 'A Lady's Name,'" "A Pair of Silk Stockings," "The Blue Paradise," "Very Good Eddie," "Hobson's Choice," "Blanche Ring in 'Broadway and Butter-milk,'" Maud Allan with her Symphony Orchestra of forty pieces, Lew Fields in "Step This Way," William T. Hodges in "Flinging Water," "Just a Woman," "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come," "Mr. Lazarus," with Henry E. Dixey; "A Pair of Queens," "The Merry Wives of Windsor," with Tom Wise and all-star cast; "Lou Tellegen in 'A King of Nowhere,'" "The Blue Envelope," and San Carlo Grand Opera Company.

Keith's—Vandeville.

Keith's will offer next week another specially selected group of attractions headed by the Melstersingers, Boston's combined Harvard, Schubert and Weber male quartet, in new solos, choruses and ensembles, with costumes and scenery representing "The Flying Station," and introducing a sensational train effect. Somewhat of a furore will be aroused, it is expected, by La Argentina, the Spanish dancer, whose "Bull Fight" dance proved a veritable surprise to Broadway.

The balance of the week will disclose Stanley James, a Washington favorite, supported by Vessie Farrell and company; Francis Dooley and Corinne Sales in "Will You, Jim?" Santly and Norton, George Bonner, Julia Curtis, Frank Le Dent, the pianist recitals, and the Pathe news pictorial.

Polli's—"For the Man She Loved."

"For the Man She Loved," a melodrama written by Carl Mason and first produced by the Keith Players of New York a few weeks ago, will be presented at Polli's Theater during the week beginning Monday, September 11. The play is based on everyday conditions of life and tells the story of a woman's sacrifices in behalf of the man she loves, who has been unjustly convicted and imprisoned and whose release and restoration to his former position in social and business life are due to her efforts. A wholly capable group of players is promised and a complete scenic equipment is provided.

Gaiety—Burlesque.

With a trio of brilliant entertainers at the head of a cast of principals who have been chosen for their special qualifications for enacting the various roles they are called upon to fill, the New Bon Ton Girls, next week's attraction at the Gaiety, will offer something new and of unusual character and vim. The trio are Leo Hoyt, Lester Allen, and Babe La Tour. The book abounds in good, wholesome humor, while the musical program includes the latest hits, as well as several original numbers. In addition, a diversified program of vaudeville specialties has been provided. Others in the cast are Peely and McCloud, Gladys Parker, and George Reynolds. A chorus of twenty girls will be a feature of the program.

Loew's Columbia—Feature Films.

The feature photoplay at Loew's Columbia will be the first half of next week will be "The Harbinger of Peace," with Louise Huff as the star. It is a Famous Players-Paramount production. For the last half of the week Edna Goodrich will be seen in the latest Morosco-Paramount photoplay, "The House of Lies." It is a comedy which has been offered Miss Goodrich.

Lycium—Burlesque.

Next week's attraction at the Lycium Theater will be the Garden Girls, an aggregation which is well known for the high character of the entertainment provided. A cast of capable fun makers, aided and abetted by a beautiful chorus of a score or more of attractive and well-gowned girls, will be seen in a musical extravaganza of merit. The company will introduce a number of novelties in the way of electrical and mechanical devices which will add materially to the enjoyment of the performances.

Cosmos—Vaudeville.

Next week's attractions at the Cosmos Theater will have four big features—"The Phonophenda" in the musical comedy tabloid, "One Day," Percy Pollock, the character actor, and his company, in the funny farce, "Bobby on the Seashore," Lottie Williams and company, in a one-act character sketch of New York East Side life, "On Stony Ground," a comedy of real merit, though amusing, and Charles B. Lawlor, author of "On the Sidewalks of New York," and his daughters, Mabel and Alice, in character songs of their own compositions.

Five other acts will include Casson and his songs and chatter; the Gisch Sisters in an aerial specialty; Dave Kinder, whistling monologist; Guerran and Nowell, "Dancing Bugs," and Maddie De Long, the baseball girl.

Moore's Garden—Feature Films.

Charlie Chaplin will head the double feature program at Moore's Strand Theater from Sunday to Wednesday inclusive, the week of September 10. In his newest comedy success entitled, "The Count," the other attractions on these days being Anna Little in "The Broken Prayer," and Mutt and Jeff in "The Spendthrift," and a picturization of the periodical entitled "Real Life." On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, Billie Burke will be seen in an episode of "Gloria's Romance," entitled "Her Vow Fulfilled." On Thursday, Friday and Saturday Richard Bennett will be presented in "The Sable Blessing."

THEATRICAL BRIEFS.

An unusually fine array of screen productions has been selected by Mr. Tom Moore for showing at his Strand Theater the week of September 10. The principal attraction on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday of that week being Douglas Fairbanks in "Fighting With Fate." The supplementary attractions on these days will be "The Surf Girl," featuring Louise Fazenda, on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, Viola Dana will be seen in "The Light of Happiness." On Saturday, for one day only, Helen Rosson and Frank R. Ritchie will be the center of attraction in "The Woman Who Trusted."

General Manager James Thatcher, of the Poll attractions, was a visitor in Washington last week, coming to town from his office in New York to be present at the opening of the theater for the current season. Mr. Thatcher has a string of nine houses under his personal supervision, this season and all of them going through the opening process.

"The Fall of a Nation." Thomas Dixon's sequel to his "Birth of a Nation," "The Battle Cry of War," a sequel to "The Battle Cry of Peace," "The Dawn of Freedom" and the complete series of E. H. Sothern film plays are some of the important big productions booked for initial presentation at the new Casino Theater at Seventh and F streets in the next few weeks.

Laurette Taylor will appear in New York Thanksgiving week in a repertoire of three plays by her husband, J. Hartley Manners. These plays are "The Harp of Life," "Happiness" and "The Winding of Eve." Her road tour will begin in Atlantic City October 5 and include Washington, Detroit, Rochester, Syracuse, Cleveland and Philadelphia.

Richard Walton Tully's new American play, "The Flame," was produced for the first time on any stage at the Lyric Theater, New York, last Thursday evening. William Courtright and Violet Heming are in the cast.

Marie Cahill is to return to the stage. It was in "Ninety in the Shade" in which Broadway last saw her nearly two years ago. She is to be seen in a play under the direction of Daniel V. Arthur in a new musical comedy.

Rehearsals of "Pom-Pom," the highly original musical diversion, in which Mimi Hagen captured New York's heart last season, have begun as a preliminary to its tour of the principal Middle Western and Eastern cities. Only the original company will be seen in "Pom-Pom."

Miss Clara Naack, the concert soloist, will sing selections from popular and classic music as a special feature of the program each afternoon and evening this week at the new Casino Theater, beginning at the noon opening tomorrow.

When Cyril Maude begins his engagement in Cleveland in "The Harbinger of Peace," which Michael Morton has based upon Stephen Leacock's "Sunshine Stories," a widely known English leading woman will make her American debut. She is Muriel Martin Harvey and has been conspicuous in many notable plays in London.

Presenting the World's Foremost Photo-Plays. The Most Select Following in the City of Washington.

Continued 10:30 A. M. to 11 P. M.

Sunday Continuous 3 P. M. to 10:30 P. M. Program Changed Sunday 4:15 P. M.

TODAY—MONDAY—TUESDAY—WEDNESDAY

DUSTIN FARNUM

"THE PARSON OF PANAMINT."

A graphic portrayal of how a "Big" business man operates cafe readers and ch...

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, AND SATURDAY.

MAE MURRAY

"THE BIG SISTER."

A powerful drama of New York life. GRAND PIPE ORGAN—SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

15c—PRICES SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS—15c

Matinee to 6 P. M. 10c

BESSIE BARRISCALE

TODAY, MON., TUES.

EXTRA—DE WOLF HOPPER in "POOR PAPA"

ADDED—MUTT & JEFF CARTOON, "INDESTRUCTIBLE HAT"

15c—PRICES SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS—15c

Matinee to 6 P. M. 10c

LIONEL BARRYMORE

TODAY, MON., TUES.

EXTRA—FUTURIST NOVELTY—"THE YELLOW GIRL"

ADDED—CARTOON COMEDIES BY HERRIMAN, OPPER & OTHERS

AMUSEMENTS.

GAYETY BURLESQUE

NINTH NEAR F—New Show Every Week

STARTING TODAY (SUNDAY) AND ALL THIS WEEK

ROSE SYDELL AND HER Famous London Belles

In A Trip To Wash-ington.

"Oh Papa!" Johnnie Weber & Bill Campbell "Oh Papa!"

New Show—Gorgeous Costumes—Girls—Girls—Girls

Remember GRAND OPENING TODAY At 3 and 8 P. M.

Next Week—Bon Ton Girls, with Babe La Tour

Presenting the World's Foremost Photo-Plays. The Most Select Following in the City of Washington.

Continued 10:30 A. M. to 11 P. M.

Sunday Continuous 3 P. M. to 10:30 P. M. Program Changed Sunday 4:15 P. M.

TODAY—MONDAY—TUESDAY—WEDNESDAY

DUSTIN FARNUM

"THE PARSON OF PANAMINT."

A graphic portrayal of how a "Big" business man operates cafe readers and ch...

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, AND SATURDAY.

MAE MURRAY

"THE BIG SISTER."

A powerful drama of New York life. GRAND PIPE ORGAN—SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

15